YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL

ON

FIRST NATIONS CHILD WELFARE

ANNUAL REPORT

1995/96

100-05061/

YUKON ADVISORY COUNCIL ON FIRST NATIONS CHILD WELFARE

Box 5492 o Whitehorse, Yukon o Y1A 5H4

Pat Martin
Chair
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Vice-Chair
841-5141

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May 31, 1996

Honorable Mickey Fisher
Minister of Health and social Services
Government of Yukon
Box 2703
Whitehorse, Yukon Y1A 2C6

Dear Mr. Fisher:

On behalf of the Yukon Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare, I am pleased to present you with our 1995/96 Annual Report.

Sincerely,

Pat Martin
Chair

/dml

Yukon Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare
ANNUAL REPORT 1995/96

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the hard work that each of the Council members has put forth in efforts to fulfil our mandate as a council. I am honored to work with a very caring and dedicated team laboring for the extremely worthwhile benefits of all First Nations children in the Yukon.

I would also like to give special thanks to past members, Vera Owlchild and Jane McIntyre for their continued support and dedication to the Council. Their contribution over the past several years has truly been invaluable.

The Council is continually striving to improve consultations with Yukon First Nations. We would like to extend an invitation to individuals or organizations who are interested in presenting their concerns or issues with regard to child welfare matters. Please contact us at Box 5492, Whitehorse, Yukon, Y1A 5H4.

Pat Martin
Chair

MEMBERSHIP

Pat Martin, Chair

Agnes Johnson, Vice-Chair

John Edzerza

Sandra Johnson

Kathy Magun

Percy Henry

Dorothy John

Lorraine Sterriah

* Vera Owlchild

* Jane McIntyre

* member resigned during this reporting period.

FORMATION AND MANDATE

The formation of the Council began in 1987 when the Minister of the day identified a need for greater involvement of First Nation people in child welfare services. The Council was approved during the summer of 1988 under regulations pursuant to the Children's Act, Section 177(1)d. The first meeting of the Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare took place in September 1988.

The Council's identified fundamental principle is for the well being of the child. Section 3 of the Regulations under the Mandate states:

(1) The Advisory Council shall advise the Executive Council member on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children in the Yukon which the Executive Council Member refers to the Council for its advice.

(2) The Advisory Council may advise the Executive Council Member on those matters concerning the welfare of Indian children in the Yukon which the Advisory Council thinks it is appropriate to bring to the Executive Member's attention.

(3) The Advisory Council may:

- *(a) consider submissions and suggestions from individuals and groups concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(b) recommend and undertake research on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(c) recommend policies and legislation to enhance the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(d) recommend and participate in the development of services concerning the welfare of Indian children;*
- *(e) publish reports and information on matters concerning the welfare of Indian children.*

MEETINGS

The Council is required to hold meetings at least four times per year. During the 1995/96 fiscal year, four two-day regular meetings were held. All meetings were held at the Yukon Indian Centre in Whitehorse on the following dates:

May 11, 12, 1995
October 5, 6, 1995
December 7, 8, 1995
February 29, March 1, 1996

In addition to the Council members, the following guests attended:

Health and Social Services:

Honorable Willard Phelps: Minister of Health and Social Services
Linda Dixon: Executive Assistant to the Minister
Anne Sheffield: Director of Family and Children's Services
Charles Pugh: Residential Services Coordinator
Tim Brady: Manager, Youth Services
Brad Bell: Supervisor, Family Support Workers
Mary Peter: FAS Family Support Worker
Maxine Kehoe: Supervisor, Placement and Support Services
Nancy Duesner: Treatment Coordinator, Child Abuse Treatment Centre
Carson Schiffkorn: Youth Achievement Centre

Community Services:

Mary Jane Jim: Traditional Parenting Program, Skookum Jim Friendship Centre
Dennis Peter: Chair, Northern Network of Services, Board of Directors
Jim Bentley: Director, Northern Network of Services

Individuals:

Barb Hume: BSW Program enrollee

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MEETINGS

Youth Achievement Centre

The Council was invited to the facility to attend a presentation by Carson Schiffkorn about the Youth Achievement Centre. The program started operation in October 1994 and involves youths 12-18 years of age with some programs being offered to 11 year olds. The four focus areas of the Centre are life style, personal and social development, low self-esteem, and high interest activities. Subjects such as youth crime, the law, court procedures, consequences of crime, job search skills, nutrition, anger management, and culture are dealt with.

Eighty percent of the youth attending have court mandated referrals, while the rest are self-referred, from foster homes, or diversion programs. Approximately 50 percent of participants are First Nation.

The Department stated that the increase in the number of youths in the care of the Department is also attributable to the fact that there has been an increase in the number of children in the Yukon. The number between 12 and 17 years of age is increasing and will continue to increase until the year 2005. There is approximately 500 more kids in that age group this year than last year, which means that there are more youths that have the potential to be charged with a crime and to appear in Youth Court. This establishes the need to establish and maintain successful diversion programs to help keep kids out of the system.

Council directed attention to the benefit of utilizing community resources, such as the elders. Emphasis was placed on their value as a strong support network. The Council was impressed with the staff's dedication, keen interest in the youth, and their sincerity and hoped that the Centre will continue providing these valuable services to youths.

HIGHLIGHTS FROM MEETINGS

Traditional Parenting Program

Mary Jane Jim made a presentation to the Council explaining the Traditional Parenting Program at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre. The program currently offers two to three day sessions with four elders presenting the teachings. Discussion develops around a variety of teachings in traditional parenting methods. The Council felt that this is a very credible program and offers much benefit in terms of promoting family health and well-being and that not enough pubic awareness or government support has been afforded it. Council wrote a letter to the Minister expressing support for this initiative and recommended that the Department of Health and Social Services make full use of valuable programming and services such as this.

The Council also made recommendation to the Minister that the decision to terminate the Counsellor position at the Skookum Jim Friendship Centre be reviewed. The Council highlighted that this position is of key importance to providing necessary guidance and continued assistance to families and individuals in pivotal situations.

FAS Family Support

The Department of Health and Social Services updated the Council on this new initiative. A Family Support Worker, Mary Peter, was hired to work exclusively with women who are at risk of having an FAS/FAE child. Council recommended that the Department contact the Chief and Council in each community to discuss this initiative and help them determine ways they can help high-risk women in their community.

Child Abuse Treatment Services (CATS)

A representative from CATS was invited to present information on their programming. CATS specializes in counselling children and their families in all areas of abuse. A Community Outreach Worker has recently been hired to travel to the communities to assist in setting up groups and facilitating workshops tailored to the community's needs. A series of short workshops dealing with sexuality in children have been developed for the communities. Much more work is being done with families, as treatment involves the whole family, not just the individual.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Minneapolis Conference

In May, 1995, two Council members, Agnes Johnson and John Edzerza had the privilege of attending a three day Conference in Minneapolis, Minnesota, which hosted upwards of 1100 delegates. They appreciated the opportunity to participate in sessions pertaining to matters such as: spiritual multi-cultural healing, moving beyond gloom, FAS, native family development and alcoholism, teenage suicide, alternative mental health services, keeping families together, native Indian foster care, protecting families through respect, emergency shelter, case management, substance abuse, caring for our children's children, custody, kinship, and related issues.

Northern Network of Services

Early in the fiscal year, Council representatives participated in the hiring committee during the tendering process seeking to employ a new Program Director at the Northern Network of Services, still operating under contract with Woods' Homes. A Board of Directors comprised of 12 local members was developed and Mr. James Bentley was hired to fill the capacity of Director in October.

Northern Network of Services has since severed it's attachment with Woods' Homes and is now operating independently under the Board of Directors. The Council has been pleased to receive regular updates on the progress that NNS is making in it's programming and is happy to be able to offer input regarding specific proposed programs and developments at NNS.

Revised Name

The Council received approval from the Minister and Cabinet to change the Council's name to reflect First Nation wording. The Council is now designated as the Yukon Advisory Council on First Nations Child Welfare.

COUNCIL ACTIVITIES

Health and Social Services Council

At the request of the Minister, the Chair of the Advisory Council is also a member of the Health and Social Services Council. The Minister felt that this would contribute towards better communication and productivity of the two Councils, specifically in areas of joint interests.

GOALS FOR 1996/97

Conference

The Council is pleased that funding has finally been approved to hold a Yukon First Nations Child Welfare Conference during the 1996/97 fiscal year. This conference has been in preliminary planning stages and has been anticipated for several years now, and the council members are excited that this goal will be brought to fruition in the upcoming fall.

The conference theme will be "Together Today For Our Children - Our Future" and will provide an unique opportunity to network with the communities in the Yukon and discuss child welfare issues. We will also be able to become familiar with the services that are available and the valuable resources that exist to assist in the resolving of various problems.

Newsletter

In order to promote awareness of the Council's function and it's activities, plans are being made to publish a periodic newsletter that will be distributed to First Nations community organizations. To ensure you are on our mailing list to receive a copy of this newsletter, please contact us at the address on Page 10.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT
For Period of April 1, 1995 to March 31, 1996

REVENUE:		
94/95 Surplus	1 252.49	
Contribution Agreement	41 200.00	
		42 452.49
TOTAL REVENUE		
EXPENSES:		
Travel	3 544.00	
Meals and Incidentals	1 826.10	
Child Care	312.00	
Honoraria	14 800.00	
Accommodation	1 546.88	
Refreshments/Lunch	583.08	
Administrative Support	7 717.50	
Telephone	79.68	
Office Expenses	662.83	
Logo Design	500.00	
Conference (MN)	<280.43>	
Conference Preparation	270.00	
Other	46.78	
		31 608.42
TOTAL EXPENSES		
		10 844.07
BALANCE, March 31, 1996		

CONTACT ADDRESS:

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